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SUBJECT: NIGER: NOVEMBER 25-27, 2008 REGIONAL SEMINAR ON TERRORISM AND TRAFFICKING

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11. Summary. The Government of Niger (GON), in cooperation with the Government of France (GOF), hosted in Niamey a regional seminar on terrorism and trafficking from November 25-27, 2008. The GON Minister of Justice (MOJ) and French Ambassador delivered opening and closing remarks at the seminar, with the GON Minister of Defense also in attendance. (Note: The GON Ministers of Interior and Foreign Affairs, out of the country, were in Paris attending an Africa-European Union conference on migration. End note.) The nine additional West African nations participating in the seminar were: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the GOF offered technical assistance for the seminar. A few diplomatic missions (United States, the European Community, Egypt, Algeria) and UN System organizations (UN Development Program, the UN Population Fund) were observers. Five workshops over the course of the three-day seminar covered the following themes: illegal migration, terrorism and trafficking, police and security force training, customs training and magistrate training. The seminar participants called for more regional collaboration and stressed the need for donor partners to provide more training and equipment to countries in the sub-region to help stem trans-regional criminal and terrorist activity. UNODC stressed that the traffickers are the offenders, as opposed to victims of trafficking. (Note: Embassy Niamey coverage of the three-day conference was shared by Ambassador Allen, Acting Defense Attaché Pognon (civilian) and Foreign Service National Investigator Djibo.) End summary.

12. Trafficking and Terrorism Workshops. Participants spoke of a nexus between trafficking and terrorism, such as how funds from drug or arms trafficking can be and are used to support terrorism. Nigerien speakers described Niger as a transit point for traffickers, with drugs originating from Latin America arriving in Mauritania and subsequently being transported across corridors in the Sahel. Cannabis was identified as the primary drug trafficked in Niger, and small quantities of cocaine (no figures were provided) were reported to have entered Niger via third country nationals and Nigeriens returning from overseas. Participants praised Niger's Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI) company for its success against traffickers, though Nigerien officials admitted that the PSI was only involved coincidentally since preventing trafficking is not the unit's

primary mission. Poverty and unemployment were cited as primary causes for illegal migration, with thousands yearly passing through Niger primarily to Magreb countries, often bearing false documents for onward travel to Europe and the United States. Participants raised concerns about the criminality associated with illegal immigration, notably trafficking of arms, drugs, explosives and people. The Nigerien hosts recommended that governments revise certain juridical texts with an eye to harmonization of laws within the region, that all ports of entry be equipped with computers and other technology to improve databases, that border control posts be juxtaposed for better collaboration.

¶3. Participants viewed Al-Qaeda in the Magreb (AQIM) as the primary threat in the region. Most participants agreed that the rebellion in Mali was different from that in Niger. Nigerien participants stated that the Mouvement Nigeriens Pour la Justice (MNJ) is more than a group of rebels and drug traffickers, citing examples of landmines being placed by MNJ rebels in northern Niger that have indiscriminately killed many innocent civilians and stressing that such an act would be considered terrorism elsewhere. Materials seized after a GON military skirmish this past October with the MNJ were flagged as evidence the MNJ continues to be a serious security threat with access to lethal weapons. Finally, the Nigerien presenters concluded that other groups that began with indigenous rebellion, in time, transitioned to becoming terrorist groups by committing terrorist acts and that MNJ potentially could do the same. Information sharing and capacity building were deemed essential for security services and military forces to effectively combat trafficking and terrorism in the region.

¶4. In the country by country presentations, most representatives reported concerns similar to those of their Nigerien counterparts. However, with regard to trafficking in persons (TIP), Benin and Togo participants indicated their respective countries face less of a

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problem than its neighbors. Further, a Cote d'Ivoire participant noted his country ceased being a magnet for TIP as a result of years of conflict/unrest.

A Senegal representative raised concerns of maritime TIP, notably to Spain and the United States.

¶5. The UNODC speaker emphasized that the seminar was not about criminalizing clandestine immigration, but rather about developing a strategy to combat the problem. She stressed that the traffickers are the offenders, that they should be pursued and their networks dismantled, as opposed to punishing the victims of trafficking. She suggested more training for law enforcement officers to ensure that distinction is made. Perpetrators cited for targeting were recruiters, transporters, lodgers, false document providers and trafficking ring leaders. There was consensus that more needs to be done to prevent tragic endings for trafficking victims.

¶6. Police, military and security force workshops. Recommendations were made for training in each of the represented countries for police, military and security forces on crisis management, cybercrime investigation and use of technical equipment such as global positioning systems (GPS) and border control management. Participants expressed the need for more cross-border information and intelligence sharing to enhance cooperation between law enforcement officials and to combat international organized crime and trafficking (arms, drugs, persons). It was recognized that more needs to be done to build good relationships with local INTERPOL offices within host countries. The French Attaché made a specific recommendation for more training and equipment for the Nigerien, Malian and Mauritanian militaries.

¶7. In the magistrates session, specialized training in the anti-terrorism protocols was deemed lacking in many countries. There was a call for updated technology and materials and it was suggested that law enforcement experts be made available during military anti-terrorism operations to collect finger prints and other evidence to support convictions. Building relationships and improving collaboration among judicial bodies within the region is viewed as key to creating an environment conducive to enhancing the magistrates' efforts to fight terrorism.

18. Customs officers also noted the need for capacity building and more information sharing among customs services in the subregion. There was a suggestion to conduct joint operations and a call to computerize customs check points. Training and material support for customs officials was highlighted as being insufficient.

19. GON MOJ Dagra Mamadou's opening remarks. MOJ Dagra described the MNJ rebels as terrorists that use land mines that have killed innocent civilians, grieving the victims' families. A translation of his remarks follows.

Begin text.

Honorable guests, let me begin by thanking you for the honor of your participation in this seminar's opening ceremony. I'm pleased to welcome to Niger our invitees, experts and participants who want to accompany us in our efforts for this type of meeting. It's my privilege to transmit to the Government of the Republic of France all the appreciation of the Nigerien Government for the decisive support that has made this seminar possible.

Mr. Ambassador, as you know, since the 17th session of the UN Commission for the Prevention of Crime and the Penal Code in Vienna in April 2008, the State Minister of Interior, Public Security and Decentralization (SMI/PS/D), who represented the President of the Republic, the SMI/PS/D) made a vow to organize in Niamey an international conference on security in the Sahelo-Saharan region.

France had an attentive ear to this matter and volunteered to provide its assistance for the organization of this regional seminar. This act is illustrative, among many others, of the excellent, strong Franco-Nigerien relationship, and I want, Mr. Ambassador, to enthusiastically make special note of this.

Honorable guests, ladies and gentlemen, the seminar that opens this morning and that will take place November 25, 26 and 27, 2008, is

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directed at the fight against terrorism and illegal trafficking of arms, drugs, migrants and money laundering.

It is a regional seminar gathering some 100 participants from ten West African nations. It includes magistrates, military officers, security officers, the police, customs officials from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo together with their Nigerien counterparts.

The seminar themes deal with the fight against terrorism, the fight against illegal trafficking, the penal system in the face of terrorism and trafficking, clandestine migration, and training for police and military forces.

The anticipated results are as follows:

first, to reinforce the national capacities to respond to illegal trafficking and terrorism and improve regional cooperation in this domain;

second, and this is a strong desire of the GON, that following this seminar, that the donor partners create conditions for multi-faceted assistance to African states represented here, to maintain a continuous fight against terrorism and trafficking.

Our regional seminar will reach all its objectives if, over the course of our session, beyond the exchanges among the participants, and beyond our West African regional cooperation, some tracks are explored and mechanisms identified with an eye to supporting the states in the Sahelo-Saharan region in their crusade against the demon of terrorism and the illicit trafficking that feeds it.

That is the major concern that we express to the French Republic and all our development partners present here, and as we await the Bamako Conference, next December, that will be consecrated, we hope, to supporting our states.

Honorable guests, dear participants, this current seminar concerns the fight against terrorism and all illicit trafficking (arms, drugs, migrants, children and money laundering) that in general feeds and maintains this planetary scourge. Because, in fact, terrorism and trafficking spares no region or nation in the world, it seems unnecessary for me to list the general developments about these two phenomena.

On the other hand, please allow me to inform you about the acts that Niger has taken in this domain and the concerns that equally hold true for other states in West Africa, notably the Sahelo-Saharan corridor.

Honorable guests, ladies and gentlemen, Niger, like other member states in the international community engages in the Global War on Terrorism.

Before, as well as after, the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSC) 1373 of September 28, 2001, my country honored its international engagements with regard to the fight against terrorism and illegal trafficking. I will note a few among many actions taken:

- a. with regard to the ratification of international judicial instruments, with the exception of one, Niger has ratified the collective universal instruments in the fight against terrorism;
- b. these same instruments have been incorporated in our penal code, with specific measures relative to terrorism and financing terrorism;
- c. a National Committee charged with following measures relative to the fight against terrorism has been in place since 2002 and its last report addressed to the UNSC Anti-terrorism Committee dates from 2007;
- d. from February 11-15, 2007, Niger received a delegation from the UNSC Anti-terrorism Committee, a delegation that positively rated our country's efforts in its obligations following UNSC Resolution 1373 (2001);

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e. in the area of money laundering, a National Unit on Financial Information Sharing (CENTIF) was established since 2004 in the Ministry of the Economy and Finance and it takes on the tasks in accordance with the dispositions of Statute No. 2004-41 of June 8, 2004;

f. in the matter of the fight against clandestine immigration, Niger participates in the "Across Sahara" project financed by the European Union that contributes to implementing policies to prevent and combat illegal migration, as well as contraband and trafficking in persons;

g. in that which concerns trafficking and illicit use of drugs, our laws are extremely severe. In that regard, defense and security forces, in general, our national army, in particular, have made some seizures of important quantities of drugs, that were destroyed on 26 June 2008, on the International Day in the Fight Against Drugs;

h. from November 12-14, 2007, and from November 18-21, 2008, with the support of the UNODC, Niger organized respectively for Nigerien magistrates, then for Malian and Nigerien magistrates, two training sessions on the "mechanics of international cooperation on penal matters in the fight against terrorism."

Honorable guests, ladies and gentlemen, those are some of the acts of Niger in the fight against terrorism and trafficking, phenomena that one cannot say enough, constitute a constant menace to peace and international security. I want to now share with you the concerns of my country in this regard.

Does terrorism have the same meaning in the North as in the South? Is it seen in the same manner? Is there no equivalent definition for terrorism?

In any case, for the Government of Niger, terrorism is one thing, whomever the victims, whether it refers to foreign tourists killed in the Saharan desert or civilians cut down by mines in the roads of Agadez to Arlit, in Maradi, Niamey or Tahoua.

Honorable guests, ladies and gentlemen, in recalling the situation of insecurity that prevails since February 2007, in the northern region of our country, I want, following the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister, to say and repeat to the representatives from the nations and international community here today, that this situation was created, without any good reason, by our brothers who took up arms against the state.

Even worse, those responsible for this insecurity take part today in planting mines on the different main roads in the zone, grieving many families, destroying diverse goods and services. The victims of the mines are not elements of our valiant defense and security forces that one claims to combat: the victims of these many mines, planted in a criminal manner along the roads, are the innocent, defenseless civilians.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is no more terrorist act than this.

As with any terrorist act, in causing fear and sowing panic and desolation among the people, one believes it can constrain the State to negotiate.

Always, and especially after September 11, 2001, the international community has strongly and resolutely decided that terrorism will not be permitted.

The Government of Niger equally says that terrorism will not be permitted, God willing.

That is the reason for which, in his name, I take you as witness, ladies and gentlemen, to state that the planting of mines in the northern region of our country constitutes terrorists acts of the worst kind. They participate in the worst form of terrorism, the same kind against which one fights today in Afghanistan and elsewhere, with a determination rarely equaled.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear participants, the Government of Niger

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would like the entire world to know that these are terrorist acts that are perpetrated daily in the northern part of our country. There is no better context for me to declare open this regional seminar on terrorism and trafficking, in wishing complete success in your work.

I thank you for your kind attention.

End text.

¶10. Minimize considered for Tripoli.

ALLEN